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Viewing cable 06PARIS953, EUR PDAS VOLKER'S FEB 3 MEETING WITH SARKOZY

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06PARIS953	2006-02-14 17:00	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Paris

Appears in these articles:

http://abonnes.lemonde.fr/documents-wikileaks/article/2011/02/09/wikileaks-les-visiteurs-de-l-ambassade_1477418_1446239.htm

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 000953

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SUBJECT: EUR PDAS VOLKER'S FEB 3 MEETING WITH SARKOZY

ADVISOR AND FORMER INDUSTRY MINISTER PARTICK DEVEDJIAN

REF: A. (A) EMBASSY PARIS DAILY REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 6

1B. 2006 AND PRIOR

(WWW.STATE.SGOV.GOV/P/EUR/PARIS/INDEX.CFM)

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: EUR Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Kurt Volker reviewed on February 3 with Patrick Devedjian, a former industry minister and key advisor to Interior Minister Sarkozy, how a possible Sarkozy administration would likely approach relations with the U.S. Devedjian said a Sarkozy administration would make "economic gestures" in connection with the reconstruction of Iraq to signal -- as much as domestic French opinion would allow -- France's more active association with U.S. goals in the region. Devedjian acknowledged that a Sarkozy victory in 2007 is far from a sure thing, while discounting Prime Minister de Villepin's chances of pushing Sarkozy aside as leader of the center-right governing party. Devedjian acknowledged that the unexpectedly persistent popularity of Socialist Party (PS) dark horse Segolene Royal (ref A) was an unforeseen development that is forcing contenders of both left and right to revisit their electoral calculations, even if he did not believe she could win in the end. END SUMMARY.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A SARKOZY ADMINISTRATION

12. (C) "We will make economic gestures with regard to the Iraq situation" is how Devedjian expressed what would be a new French willingness, under a Sarkozy administration, to more actively support U.S. goals in Iraq. Devedjian, evoking the strand of anti-Americanism that persists in France and the widespread public hostility to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, cautioned however that how much France might be able to do along these lines depended on what would be "politically possible" at the time. Devedjian did not specify what those "economic gestures" might be. Comment: Increases in development aid and, possibly further debt forgiveness, could be what he had in mind. End Commentg.

13. (C) Devedjian used the phrase "Atlanticist and communitarian" to describe Sarkozy's overall outlook, and to distinguish it from that of Villepin, which is often described as "nationalist and Republican." Devedjian underlined that "we will not be ceding to an anti-American campaign," notwithstanding the efforts of Sarkozy's opponents to try and tar Sarkozy as pro-American. Devedjian made clear that not only would the Sarkozy campaign not engage in any outbidding of the opposition in anti-Americanism, but that it would also make every effort to avoid "bringing the U.S. into our domestic politics."

14. (C) In response to PDAS Volker's hope that, at NATO, a Sarkozy victory might result in useful, operationally consequential changes in French behavior, Devedjian lamented that the French press and public "are not interested in NATO." This has permitted President Chirac, he said, to conduct French policy in NATO beyond public scrutiny, without accountability for the consequences. Devedjian suggested that French institutional reforms proposed by Sarkozy, specifically, an NSC-like coordinating mechanism for foreign policy and periodic reports by the president to the parliament on current issues, could have the effect of bringing France's NATO policy out of the shadows. This might eventually lead to a more positive appreciation of NATO's role by the French public.

LONG, UNCERTAIN ROAD TO 2007

15. (C) Getting to a Sarkozy administration in 2007, as Devedjian soberly acknowledged, was far from a foregone conclusion. Devedjian believed that Sarkozy's "type of leadership" -- "the hands-on leadership" seen in Sarkozy's successful, personal management of the security response to the urban unrest that swept France last fall, along with the

"rupture" with past practice advocated by Sarkozy -- are what the French people truly want. Devedjian specified that by "rupture with the past," Sarkozy primarily means slimming down a bloated and pervasive state that stifles growth by taking too big a share of national wealth and which undermines individual initiative and commercial innovation by over-regulation of business activity. Devedjian underlined that voters want "renewal," and he musingly volunteered that

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"Sarkozy on the right, and Segolene (Royal) on the left" were "the two candidates that would most respond to this desire for change."

¶6. (C) Devedjian confidently dismissed the possibility of Prime Minister de Villepin mounting a successful campaign to replace Sarkozy as the candidate of the center-right in 2007. Devedjian said that "Villepin and Sarkozy are in agreement" that some sort of primary process should decide a single nominee for their party, the UMP. Devedjian observed that Villepin won't challenge Sarkozy for control of the party so long as Sarkozy clearly benefits from both firm command of the party and a healthy public image. He added that Villepin "has always counted on Sarkozy's self-destruction -- which he's been counting on in vain since 2002." Devedjian alluded to Villepin's view that Sarkozy's personality -- somehow, not presidential -- would in the long run work to shift the support of the center-right to Villepin.

¶7. (C) Turning to the potential opposition to Sarkozy on the center-left, Devedjian clucked at the long-running, confused contentiousness in the Socialist Party (PS) over both who will lead the party and what the party will stand for in ¶2007. In Devedjian's view, neither Party First Secretary Francois Hollande nor any of the party's mainstream figures are likely to make compelling candidates. Asked to assess the option for the socialists of "bringing back Jospin" -- that is, unifying the divided PS under former Prime Minister Lionel Jospin -- Devedjian declared that "Jospin isn't the future, he's the past -- and that's not what voters are looking for." As for the popular President of the Poitou-Charentes Region, Segolene Royal, Devedjian said that, despite her appeal to voters wanting change, "Segolene has no chance" of winning the PS nomination.

¶8. (C) Devedjian pointed out that Royal had in preceding days made statements in support of "Blairist" policies to address some of France's economic problems. "The only other Blairists in the PS are Kouchner and Bockel," Devedjian summed up. (Note and comment: Former Health Minister Bernard Kouchner and Mayor of Mulhouse Jean-Marie Bockel are the PS's most outspoken "liberals." Adoption of anything resembling their views is out of the question for the vast majority of PS party members. Even so, Devedjian's inference is disingenuous -- Royal is exceedingly popular among party members. End note and comment.) Reflecting on how Royal's popularity -- the emergence of her candidacy as a potentially serious one -- has upset the calculations of contenders on both left and right, Devedjian joked, "Now that she's wound up and going, even Francois Hollande must realize she's not going to quit at his, or anybody else's say so." (Note: Royal and Hollande have been domestic partners for over 20 years. End Note.) Devedjian reprised the familiar refrain that Royal's personality, allegedly both disagreeable and brittle, is not up to carrying the weight of the presidency. Implying that this unfitness for the job would become evident in due time, Devedjian said that "Everybody who knows her knows it, Francois Hollande most of all."

PARTICIPANTS

¶9. (SBU) Devejian was accompanied by the UMP's Director for International Affairs, Pascal Drouhaut and a staff assistant, Marie-Celie Guillaume. PDAS Volker was accompanied by PO1 M-C and PolOff. Devedjian and Volker parted agreeing to stay in touch -- in particular, should Devedjian, Drouhaut or

other Sarkozy advisors travel to Washington in the near future.

SARKOZY'S ADVISORS

¶10. (C) Sarkozy's inner circle of political allies and advisors consists of Francois Fillon, Brice Hortefeux and Patrick Devedjian. Hortefeux is currently Junior Minister (for Territorial Collectivities) under Sarkozy at the Interior Ministry. Fillon and Devedjian, who were members of the government of Jean-Pierre Raffarin, were excluded from the current Villepin government precisely because of their closeness to Sarkozy. Under Raffarin, Fillon was Minister of Education and Devedjian was Junior Minister for Industry. Both now have positions in the UMP, and devote themselves full-time to making Nicholas Sarkozy the next president of France. Fillon tends to take the lead in the fashioning of Sarkozy's policy proposals, while Devedjian tends to focus on

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tactics for countering other contenders and on strategy for getting the votes to win. Fillon is considered a likely candidate for prime minister, with Devedjian at Justice or Interior, should Sarkozy win in 2007.

¶11. (U) This message has not been cleared by PDAS Volker. Please visit Paris' Classified Website at:
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